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Plato on the Complexity of the Psyche

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What were the parts of the psyche posited by Plato in the Republic? The question calls not for a list but for an account of the grounds on which Plato posited and distinguished such parts. It calls for an account of their nature and role in his system.

We are not lacking in attempts at such an account. These parts have been termed "faculties", "principles", "activities", "aspects", "instances", and "levels" of the psyche. Their nature and role have been characterized in ways influenced as much perhaps by the connotations of these terms as by the details of Plato's text. Yet scholars have long known better. Ritter, Taylor and Graeser, to name only three, have plainly warned of the confusions that result from characterizing the parts Plato posits as if they were psychological divisions more familiar to us.

Unhappily, to warn of possible confusions is not sufficient to deliver us from them, for they continue to be encouraged by familiar works of interpretation. Perhaps the most common of these confusions results from the suggestion that the parts of the psyche posited by Plato were faculties — "powers" or "capacities" on the order of those posited by Aristotle and modern psychologists. It will be helpful in dispelling this and other such confusions to ask the question, "What were the parts of the psyche posited by Plato?", and to minimize the seductive influence of any later psychological terminology in answering it. The answer can then be applied to illuminate related themes in later dialogues, especially the Phaedrus.

I

Any plausible answer to the question must be bound up with Plato's theory of justice. At 386D-E and again at 435A-B Plato lays down the hypothesis that justice in the polis and justice in the individual are the same. This hypothesis dominates the dialogue. By 435A-B Plato has argued at length that justice in the polis is a harmony of specialized function obtaining among distinct and potentially seditious classes of agents.

The question Plato must explore from 435B on is whether or not the psyche, like the polis, actually contains distinct and usually seditious agents. The stakes riding on the answer are by this point high. Justice in the polis he makes out to be a certain relation among plausibly real and distinct relata. If the psyche does not contain equally real and distinct relata, justice there cannot be the same as justice in the polis, and Plato has wasted 3 1/2 books. In effect he recognizes these stakes at 434D6-7.

What Plato needs in order to show that he has not been exploring a blind alley must not be minimized. Nothing less than a structural and functional isomorphism between polis and psyche will do. It would be an understatement then to say that on Plato's view there must be an analogy between the polis and the psyche. The appearance of being one thing must prove as deceptive for the psyche as it did for the ordinary polis at 422E-423A. The psyche must upon examination prove to be literally complex, and literally reducible to parts which are independent of one another in the sense that they can stand in direct conflict as political factions do.

In his examination and argument Plato employs both formal and observational premises. At 430E-431A he comments upon the phenomenon we call self-control:

... the expression "self-control" is laughable, for the controller of self and the self that is weaker and is controlled is the same person ... But ... the expression seems to want to indicate that in the psyche of the person himself there is a better and a worse part; whenever what is by nature the better part is in control of the worse, this is expressed by saying that the person is self-controlled or master of himself, and this is a term of praise. When, on the other hand, the smaller and better part, owing to poor upbringing or bad company, is over-powered by the larger
and worse, this is made a reproach and is called being defeated by oneself, and a person in that situation is called uncontrolled.6

The view of self-control suggested here is one Plato continues to hold as late as the Laws. As stated here in the Republic it prepares the way for Plato's formal argument for regarding the psyche as literally complex and isomorphic to the polis. That argument proceeds in several steps which we may paraphrase as follows:

1). It is plain that the same thing will not do or suffer opposites in relation to the same thing in the same respect and at the same time (435B6-8). Such opposites would be, e.g., assenting and dissenting, aiming at something and rejecting it, embracing and avoiding (437B1-3).

2). So if perhaps one finds such opposites arising in oneself, one will not be "the same thing" but a plurality (436B8-C1).

3). One does find such opposites arising in oneself, since

   a). Anger (τῆς ὀίρης) sometimes combats appetites τῆς ἑπετροφίας) as one alien thing does another (440A6-7).

   b). Often we observe that when appetites compel a person contrary to the 'calculative' part (τὸν λοιπὸν), he rebukes himself (440A9-B1).

   c). The 'spirited' part (τὸν ὅμορφον) is by nature the ally of the 'calculative' unless it is perverted by poor nurture (441A2-4).

There is evidence then of "civil war in the psyche" (τῆς σφίγματος 440E5), a conflict requiring distinct and alien contestants. Evidence of such conflict may be observed not merely in oneself but in others. Thus, in Leontius' psyche there occurred a conflict between a part interested in viewing a pile of corpses and a part opposed to this as disgraceful (439E-440A). This conflict was evinced in his behavior.

4). It follows then that the psyche is indeed complex and faction-ridden in precisely the way the polis had proved to be earlier (441C5-7). In its parts the psyche is isomorphic to the polis, for "the same kind of parts and the same number of parts are to be found in the polis and in the psyche of each of us" (441C6-7).

5). The psyche and polis are isomorphic in their states or conditions, and in the origin of these: "It necessarily follows that the individual is wise in the same way, and in the same part of himself, as the city. ... And the part which makes the individual brave is the same as that which makes the city brave, and in the same manner, and everything which makes for virtue is the same in both ... ... a man is just in the same way as a city is just. ...the city was just because each of the three classes in it was fulfilling its own task."

Two parallel pieces of reduction take place in Bk. IV. First Plato reduces a polis to its parts and the characteristics of a polis to the characteristics and relations of its parts. At 435E Socrates says,

It would be laughable if anyone thought that the appearance of spiritedness in a polis is not derived from the individuals in it, as with those in Thrace or Scythia or generally in the North.13
At 428E it is claimed that if a polis seems wise as a whole, this is owing to the ἐπισκόπημη or understanding found in its smallest part, the class of guardians. It is that class which is influential when the polis is said to display wisdom. And this influence is clearly literal: the guardians cause certain wise things to be done and prevent the doing of unwise ones. Hence Plato is not merely trafficking in points of informal logic. The division into parts is likewise literal. The appearance that the polis as a whole is wise is deceptive, for it contains parts which lack wisdom, and if such parts had usurped the place of the wise part and had directed the behavior of the whole, the polis would have lacked wisdom.

Secondly, at 435E Socrates affirms that this same pattern of reductive argument is to be applied to the individual person. Again, this neither is nor could be a loose analogy if Plato's arguments are to go through. It is to be taken as a piece of sober theorizing, and taken as literally as any piece of theorizing in the dialogues. There are many indications of this. For example, at 443C-D, with none of the hints or warnings with which Plato usually surrounds self-consciously figurative language, an overt act of a person is described as "the overt action of the thing that is in one". At 436A Plato had laid it down as one of two hypotheses (the one later accepted) that the parts of the psyche are the entities responsible when we start or move. Again at 439C-D overt conduct is said to mirror or be an image of inner activity. And in applying this theory later in the Republic to assess the happiness or misery of the tyrant and the causes of the tyrant's actions, Socrates is made to remark that the tyrant's external acts betray the miserable internal economy of the tyrant's psyche to the informed observer who is able to consider the entire psyche.

There is no blinking the fact that Plato was attempting to account causally for persons' actions, not analyze concepts. One does not appeal to observations of tyrants in their unguarded moments to substantiate a piece of conceptual analysis. Plato is out to account causally not just for isolated actions but for the overall direction (or lack of it) in the life a person leads. This is evident at 581B-C, where Socrates is made to claim that there are three sorts of people and three corresponding sorts of lives. An individual is of one of these three sorts and leads the life he or she does because of the part of the psyche which rules the others in that individual's psyche. Talk of "rule" is plainly causal and explanatory in force, and given the isomorphism of polis and psyche that Plato posits and requires for his argument, we are to take it as straightforward, not metaphorical.

Talk of the rule of one part over others and of the difficulty the best part has in achieving it in the face of efforts by the other parts to usurp its role underscores Plato's very ground for believing there are parts. The sole ground on which Plato distinguishes parts of the psyche is the psyche's susceptibility to internal conflict. Susceptibility to internal conflict on this view shows that the psyche cannot be one entity. The "cannot" here is logical: if x is both G and H, and anything which is H is not G, then it would follow that x is both G and not G, which cannot be the case. If x nevertheless seems to be both G and not G, we must look for seams in x; x cannot conceivably be simple. Thus if Leontius both wants to view corpses and despises corpse-viewing, and if x's despising corpse-viewing entails x's not wanting to view corpses, "Leontius" is the name of at least two entities deceptively packaged as one.

We have noted that Plato divided human beings into classes in accordance with their predominant desires or ultimate aims. He argues at 485D-E and 486C that the desire that
predominates in a person's life will correlate with that person's chief area of expertise or ability. One is the kind of person one is owing to one's predominant desire. One may have others, however. Farmers, as we see at 374A-D, are able to form something they might call an army to defend the polis, and may even want to do this, but they are likely to do a poor job of it, and had best cater to appetite by growing food and leave defense to strong-spirited, fearless professional soldiers (375A9-B3). Function varies not precisely with capacity in any minimal sense of "capacity" but with competence. At 353A Plato indicates that a thing's function is shown by what it alone can do or by what it can do better than anything else. In his political thought, it is the second indication of function which is relevant. The auxiliaries have the protective function they do not because craftsmen cannot wield weapons but because the auxiliaries can perform this function better than anyone else. There would be no occasion for Plato's principle of specialization if citizens of diverse classes could not overlap at a minimal level in their capacities and their desires. The occasion for this principle is the widespread πολυπραγμοσύνη in the ordinary polis. Plato sees clearly the distinction between minimal capacity and competence.

Since Plato regards the psyche as isomorphic to a polis composed of people capable of πολυπραγμοσύνη, it would be odd if he chose an entirely different principle of specialization for the parts of the psyche than the very principle he had invoked for the parts of the polis -- the principle that one is to do what one is competent to do and leave other tasks to others. Yet this odd shift in principles of specialization has been attributed to Plato by interpreters who characterize the parts of the psyche he posits as faculties. A faculty, by definition, is a capacity for the one thing its name would suggest. "Appetite" on a facultist view would be a capacity for a certain sort of desire and nothing else; "Reason" would be simply and solely a capacity for reasoning. Thus a faculty's specialization of function would be the automatic and trivial result of its incapacity to do anything its name did not suggest.

Such triviality is not uncommonly credited to Plato by interpreters and translators who speak of the parts of the psyche as if they were faculties. But this will not fit the text. Talk of one faculty's usurping the function of another would be plainly absurd. Yet Plato at 440E5 speaks of γῆς ψυχής στάσεις, a "civil war in the psyche", and at 443D3-6 describes the parts' meddlesome tendency to usurp the functions of other parts. Talk of usurpation or indeed any other activity of a faculty would be doubly absurd once we realize that faculties are capacities, and capacities are not agents; they require agents to employ them, and usurpation is clearly the act of an agent. Yet this talk of usurpation is essential to Plato's view of injustice.

Another insuperable textual obstacle to taking the parts as faculties is found in Plato's description of what it takes to inhibit such usurpation of function. At 442A-B and 586E5 he prescribes education and training to induce each part to perform its own function. Plainly one does not have to induce what cannot by definition be otherwise.

Facultist mistakes stem from a failure to take seriously Plato's isomorphism of polis and psyche. At 441C6-7 he claims that there are the same number and kind of parts in the psyche as in the polis. The parts of the polis were classes of people grouped together not on the basis of their possessing one and only one capacity per group but on the basis of the common predominant love or interest and common competence found in the group's members. With this isomorphism Plato commits himself to assigning parts of the psyche usable functions and the minimal versatility this presupposes.

Further evidence that Plato acts on this commitment may be found in the diverse names he gives to each part. To weigh this evidence fairly, however, we must for the time
being refrain from taking any of these names as exhausting or limiting the capabilities of the part to which it is assigned. Given their history in faculty psychology and in interpretations influenced by it, the terms "Reason", "Spirit" and "Appetite" unfortunately do exhaust or limit the capacity of anything to which they are applied in our context. It will be prudent then to let the parts go incognito for a time, labelling them uncontrovertially as A, B and C, and noting the things Plato says and suggests about the desires, capacities and activities of each in their names and descriptions.

One obstacle to doing this is the English definite article which occurs in mechanical renderings of Platonic expressions such as το ἐπιθυμητικόν. We are often told this means "The Desiderative" or "The Appetitive". This is misleading, however, for the connotations of the English definite article differ substantially from those of Plato's neuter singular το. Plato's το was a standard Greek device for making a noun or piece of technical terminology out of anything to which it was prefixed. When so used it does not suggest "the one and only", and thus provides no support for interpreters who treat a part of the psyche labelled το as the one and only thing in the psyche capable on Plato's view of ___. These parts, we must remind ourselves, are isomorphic to usurpers and busybodies.

Even usurpers and busybodies have overriding or predominant loves, however, and lesser desires over which these normally hold sway. One can be a lover of more than one thing. We should bear this in mind when Plato describes each part of the psyche with multiple ὑπο- compounds. Part A, dominant in his philosopher-kings, is termed το ὑπολογισμός or "lover of learning" and το ἡθος ἅπατον or "lover of wisdom" at 581B7. It is called το λογιστικόν or "calculative", as at 439D5, and is accordingly assigned the role of taking counsel (442B7) and exercising forethought on behalf of the entire psyche (441E5). Part B, dominant in his auxiliaries, is called το ψυχολογισμόν, "lover of victory" and το ψυχόγνωσις, "lover of honor" (581B1-2). It is also called το θυμοειδές, "spirited", as at 441A3. Part C, strongest in people suited to be craftsmen, is termed το ὑπολογισμόν, "lover of money" or "lover of possessions" (580E7), and το ψυχόκεφαλός, "lover of gain" (581A7). It is said to love food and drink (439D5-6), and is called το ἐπιθυμητικόν or "appetitive" (439D7).

What relation holds between the multiple "loves" attributed to each part? Plato evidently did not conceive of these as miscellaneous and unrelated. At 357B4-D2 he had pointed out that people value some things for their own sakes, others for their consequences, and still others for both. The parts of the psyche resemble people of various political classes in this respect as in most others. At 580E6 he calls part C το ὑπολογισμόν or "lover of money" in the very sentence in which he is explaining that it loves money because it is most conducive to its ultimate end (ἀποτελεσματα αἰ̔... ὑποθυμίας), the satisfaction of its appetites for food, drink and sex. Its regard for money is instrumental, much as its regard for securing part A's superior logistical assistance is at 553C-D. It does not love thinking; it loves money and property as means to sensual gratification, and any regard it has for calculative ability is regard for this ability as a means to obtaining money and property. It is not indifferent to the instrumental value of thinking, and places some value on it, though it is not said to love it.

It seems reasonable to suppose that among the various loves assigned to part B at 581A, the love of honor is primary, and victory, good reputation and rule are loved as means to this, though Plato is not explicit on this point.

If there is an ordering of means and ends in the various things loved by a given part, plainly there is nothing to prevent what is loved for its own sake by one part from being
valued weakly as a means by another. At 441E5 part A is assigned the function of exercising forethought on behalf of the entire psyche. At 442C4-8 it is charged with understanding and seeking what will benefit each part and the whole they comprise. To be concerned for each part is to be concerned to quiet and satisfy each, as we see from 571D5-572B2. Thus, as 586D8 indicates, part A will actually prescribe or approve (ἐνήγαγε) certain pleasures of gain and victory. The parts need not disagree in their opinions about what is of value and what is allowable. In a just person they will not disagree (442D), even though their natural tendency is to disagree.

A common awareness of means/end relationships in each part suggests precisely the sort of versatility a capacity for usurpation presupposes. It suggests a minimal capacity we might call 'cognitive' even in part C. Plato's distaste for demotic or popular senses of terms and for the ontological slum in which they have their use leads him to say that part C is senseless (Ἀνοήτως, 605B9), but this must be taken in much the way one takes his claim that none of the poleis Greeks lived in deserved to be called a polis (422E2-423B2). Often he reminds us that on his view a term's primary denotation is an ideal paradigm and that things diverging widely from this scarcely deserve to have the term used of them. In the psyche the ideal ruler and administrator was part A, but we must not let his zeal in claiming its comparative superiority over parts B and C in this role obscure the fact that he has endowed B and C with sufficient ability to usurp the role for a time, if only to botch it. If part C were senseless in the way a rock is, there would be no question of its usurping A's role. C is senseless more nearly in the way Cleon the Tanner was, and foolish (Ἄλδογστον', 439D7) as he was also.

That Plato assigns a minimal level of 'cognitive' capacity to B and C is indicated in a number of ways other than their corresponding to political factions which have this capacity. At 571C, part C is said to be capable of devising elaborate dream plots while part A sleeps. Thus part C has the ability to imagine complex scenarios, and it is capable of 'ruling' not simply in sleep but in the waking life of tyrants, on his view.

The parts are frequently depicted as being aware of one another. The story of Leontius at 439E-440A suggests that part B combats and rebukes part C on occasion. Both parts are depicted as being capable of obeying or following part A, which suggests that they are aware of it and in communication with it (586D5-7, E3).

What the parts are aware of in one another are not merely desires but opinions. The unleashing of part C at 571C is not simply the unleashing of many and dread appetites (573D6-8) but the emancipation of certain opinions which were formerly freed only in sleep (574D-E). That parts B and C hold opinions and hence may be said to "think that..." is borne out at 603D where Plato speaks of us as having within ourselves contradictory opinions about the same thing at the same time. He is well aware of what this implies when taken together with his principle that the same thing cannot at the same time and in the same respect stand in opposite relations to a second thing. In fact he reiterates at 604B his view that one may distinguish parts in cases of internal conflict.

This has surprising antecedents and implications. The practice of the elenctic Socratic dialectic in earlier dialogues and even in Bk. I of the Republic itself had made it glaringly obvious that the same person at the same time can unwittingly hold two or more opinions which are in conflict on an issue. But now Plato can explain how and why Socrates was able to find contradictory opinions in the same person. We each have inferior parts which tend to have inferior opinions. At 605C Plato speaks of a part which cannot distinguish the greater and lesser, but believes (Ὑγιομενως) that the same things are now one,
now the other. The opinions of a base part are also mentioned at 574D-E. Plato's stated goal is for all of the parts to agree in their opinions (442D3), for the person whose parts these are accordingly to be of one mind (603D).

Although the passage from 603-5 is more explicit than any in Bk. IV, it makes no break with the views expressed in IV, and is in fact anticipated there in its essentials. When Plato at 437A stated his view that the same thing cannot at the same time and in the same respect be, do or suffer opposites, he made it quite inclusive enough for later application to thoughts and opinions. And in fact he immediately suggests such an application at 437B when he gives as his first example of a pair of opposites suggesting a division in the psyche ἔνδοξαι, "nodding assent" or "approving", and ἔνδοξεῖν, "nodding dissent" or "disapproving".

Part B is said to be not only capable of having opinions but to be in need of intelligent communication either from the wisdom-loving part A within the person himself or perhaps from other persons' wisdom-loving parts. At 550B Plato speaks of bad communications in connection with the nurture of morally and politically inferior persons. As early as 410D he had claimed that θὸς ὑμοίος ἐστί, which emerges as the "spirited" part B in Bk. IV, will become brave if rightly trained, but brutal, harsh and savage otherwise. He describes the training it needs as μουσική or "music". But "music" includes λόγοι or accounts, as 376E-377A indicates. Plato holds that the honor-loving part B has need of stories, fables and the like to tame its wilder tendencies. And at 441A2-4 he claimed that it naturally heeds the instructions of the wisdom-loving part provided it has not been corrupted. If it heeds such instructions, stories and fables, then it must be able to understand them, much as the soldiers to whom it corresponds are. If it can understand them it is not devoid of sense.

This is not to say that parts B and C left to their own devices can think in such a way as to arrive at true opinions, on Plato's view, far less preserve any true opinion they may be given. They correspond, after all, to politicians for whose opinions he had only contempt, as one will recall from 425E-426E. He had a similar contempt for the indigenous opinions of parts B and C, especially C.

But this raises a difficult question for Plato's conception of psychic justice. If parts B and C dimly discern means to ends, and have distinct opinions of their own, how is it possible for part A to dislodge their seditious opinions and achieve psychic harmony and justice? How can it rule over rivals which are neither weak nor stupid?

On the face of it one might think it impossible for part A to rule over B and C. He pointedly calls C "the mass of the psyche" (442A6), and likens it to an immense, many-headed hydra caged with a small lion and a tiny human being (588Bff.). He tells us that it is the task of this tiny human being to tame and rule the other two beasts with which it is caged. But having depicted them as powerful beasts he makes one wonder how on his view one might tame and rule them. Indeed, he makes one wonder whether justice in the psyche, so conceived, is possible at all. If one thinks justice in the polis is nevertheless possible, one must then ask whether justice in the polis and justice in the psyche can be the same, as Plato claimed, especially if justice in the polis must have its source in psychic justice. Questions about how psychic justice can be achieved thus return to plague Plato's claim that justice in the polis is justice in the psyche writ large.

Plato's tale of the beasts was confessedly a simile, however, not a piece of psychological theorizing. On his actual theory, these parts are not beasts which the best part must master but more nearly bullies -- large, selfish and overbearing people. Since they correspond not to beasts but to people, they are being likened to persuadable agents. These
parts hold opinions, and one opinion can be exchanged for another in the process of persuasion. We know that Plato's goal was unanimity between the parts (442D2). But does Plato go so far in his isomorphism of polis and psyche that he posits an internal, psychic counterpart to the process of persuasion?

He does. In the Republic itself Plato's model of a person's internal thought-processes is unabashedly discursive. At 574D-E he speaks of a conflict in the tyrant's psyche between opinions accounted just and opinions normally restricted to expression in dreams. Between the discrete opinion-holding agents in the psyche there can be bad communications, and one part may well cry out in protest at another (550B, 439E). In the psyche which overcomes such problems one part tells soothing stories to another, calming, pacifying and 'charming' it (441E-442A, 607B1-608B3).

The view that thought is internal discourse is made still more explicit in the Theaetetus and Sophist. At Theaetetus 189E Plato characterizes a person's λόγος or account as the decisive utterance resulting from a conversation of the psyche with itself, a conversation complete with questions, answers, affirmations and denials. Given that this is precisely what one would expect on the theory of the psyche as composed of agent-like parts, and given that Plato continues to hold that theory as late as Sophist (227Eff.), Timaeus (69B-72D) and Laws (626D-627B, 689D), it is plain that on his view this internal conversation takes place between distinct parts of the psyche. Again, at Sophist 263E he suggests that the thought of a person and the account given by the person are the same, with only one important difference: thought is the silent internal dialogue of the psyche with itself, while an account is "the stream that flows from the psyche through the mouth".

If such internal conversations as Plato posits can contain questions, answers, affirmations and denials, it seems a small matter to add that some answers and affirmations might be persuasive, and others not. Again this was anticipated in the Republic: Plato spoke of the gentleness and persuasiveness of the wisdom-loving part, and of the brutality and force to which the other parts tend (589B-D). The wisdom-loving part A is to study unity or harmony with an eye to what will help it achieve first of all one crucial sort of harmony -- harmony of belief between it and other parts of the psyche. At 442D2-3 Plato claims that all parts must believe together that the wisdom-loving part must rule. And the person in whom it does rule will bend all his or her efforts to studies which will help engender a condition of moderation, justice and wisdom (591B). What sorts of studies might these be? And how are they related to justice in the polis?

The answer is illuminated by a more informative and explicit passage matching 591B at Phaedrus 229E-230A. There Socrates is made to remark that he has no time at all for investigating the truth about Boreas, the Centaurs, the Chimera, or the like:

For me there is no leisure at all for these things. The reason for this is that I am not yet able to understand myself in accordance with the Delphic inscription: so it appears to me ludicrous to investigate alien things when I do not understand that. Whence I am pleased to let these things go, and being persuaded by the customary view about them, ..., I investigate myself rather than these things -- whether I happen to be a more complex beast than Typhon, or whether I am a more domesticated and simpler animal who shares by nature in a certain divine portion and is not puffed up.

This passage suggests not merely the priorities of the wisdom-loving part at its best, but the principal source from which this part can gain additional influence over the other parts, as we shall see. This key study is self-study or literally psychology, the study
of the psyche. Even dialectical conversation on Socrates' view might be viewed as a form of self-study, for at 255D he suggests that others with whom we converse are like mirrors in which we can see ourselves reflected. Attention one might expend upon the study of mythology or even the trees and country places is better spent upon self-study, the examination of the psyche's complexities, Socrates suggests. Why?

The business of the wisdom-loving part is to guide the other parts by persuasion, to transplant into alien parts its own opinions, or, more accurately, opinions corresponding in content to its knowledge. It is not likely to succeed in doing this unless it recognizes the number and nature of those alien parts. Thus at 270Cff. Plato calls for a full study of these on the model of Hippocratic studies in medicine. The focus of such studies will be the things each part does or endures, and what affects each in what ways. Above all, such studies will focus on the effects of different sorts of discourses on different parts of the psyche.

The function of discourse, Plato suggests at 271B, is to lead the psyche by persuasion. Presumably this is the function of those speeches of one part to another required by the sober dialectical passages in Republic, Theaetetus and Sophist mentioned above, and by the myth of the charioteer and his horses in the Phaedrus itself (254C-D). As 271A suggests, the wisdom-loving part is to learn towards what each of the other parts is inclined. And it must understand that different parts, like different people, are moved by quite different sorts of appeals. The wisdom-loving part, like the wisdom-loving person ruled by this very part, must learn what each part loves and must construct discourses which are effective owing to their promising each part what it loves. The prerequisites for self-mastery and the prerequisites for political mastery are precisely the same on Plato's view -- an adequate, psychologically sophisticated rhetoric.

The political importance of this has long been recognized by commentators on the Phaedrus, but its psychological and moral importance have not, with the result that it has often struck readers as quite uncertain why Plato would write a single dialogue dealing in succession with the seemingly miscellaneous and disparate topics of love, the psyche and rhetoric. But under the interpretation I am suggesting, the Phaedrus' sequence of topics makes excellent sense. It makes more explicit the Republic's notion that a person's constituent psychic parts may each be understood in terms of what it loves, and that each of these parts may be influenced by discourses offering it hope of attaining what it loves.

The Phaedrus provides evidence that in his discussion of rhetoric Plato is talking not simply about how to persuade plebeians. He suggests that persuading plebeians begins at home, within one's own psyche. He evidently saw intra-personal communication as more important than inter-personal communication, and as the basis for it, in fact, much as justice in the psyche was the basis for overt justice at Republic 443Cff. At 267A, for example, he claimed that the account, discourse or speech 'written' in the psyche itself is the most important of all, not the discourse the rhetorician writes out for others to read. At 278A7-B1 he noted that the most legitimate offspring of the genuine rhetorician will be the account or discourse 'written' in his own psyche. This is not a recommendation that the rhetorician memorize his speeches. He is recommending that the best part of the psyche lead the other parts by discourse, that it lead them to unity or harmony in belief and action. To implant an account in one's own psyche is for one part of the psyche to implant it not in itself, which is scarcely necessary, but in alien parts. The part which does the implanting is part A. Only when this implanting has been done is the possessor of this wisdom-loving part qualified to lead others by his craft. Like the true physician at Gorgias 514Dff., the true rhetorician must cure himself first. The cure consists in ridding oneself of internal dissent and faction, achieving the unanimity of belief held up as a goal at Republic 442D.
But this goal for the psyche is likened to health in the body at Phaedrus 270B7, thus reinforcing the impression made by Gorgias 479B9, 486D, Republic 444D-E, 476E2, 571Dff., 584E6, and 603B1. And Plato holds that this goal is attainable by verbal means — by the use of words so remarkable in their effect that he terms them or "charms" and likens them to ἄραμμα or drugs. Yvon Brès and Anthony Kenny have recognized and documented Plato's pioneering role in developing beyond metaphor a concept of mental health. But Plato played a comparable role in developing if not devising a concept of psychotherapy by verbal means, as Lain-Entralgo has recognized. Plato's Socrates (perhaps with mock-modesty) concedes a debt to the Thracian physicians of Zalmoxis' school. At Charmides 157A he remarks that he learned from these physicians that

...the treatment of the soul ... is by means of certain charms, and these charms are words of the right sort: by the use of such words is temperance engendered in our souls, and as soon as it is engendered and present we may easily secure health to the head and the rest of the body also.

Whether the concession of a debt here is serious or ironic, there is abundant evidence that Plato carries the notion of the treatment of the psyche very far, integrating it with his theory of the parts. This theory as he develops it is capable of accounting for the power of such Zalmoxian words or "charms".

Plato's theory of the power of words is modelled upon Greek theories of nutrition, according to which like feeds on like. Previously we have seen that on Plato's view a λόγος or account proceeds from a particular part of the psyche. But it also proceeds in a sense to a particular part, which it then nourishes or feeds. At Republic 590E5-591A2 Plato notes that our aim in controlling children is to foster or treat the best part in them by means of the best part in ourselves, establishing a similar guardian in them, and only then leaving them free. His term ἔργανος has both nutritive and therapeutic connotations, as one would expect when it was used by one who evidently followed Hippocratic medical developments so closely.

This nutritive and dietetic view of the treatment of the psyche is expressed in Plato's criticisms of actual poets, dramatists, sophists and rhetoricians in the Republic. At 605B-C Plato criticizes the mimetic poet for pleasing an unreasonable part of the psyche. To please such a part, he suggests, is to feed it a hearty meal and thus to increase its strength and vitality relative to the other parts (606A-E, 585B4, 585D5-7, 589B7). Poetry and music which please the possession-loving part C he found psychologically, morally and politically unhealthy, and he complains of them accordingly at 411A-412A, 404D-E, and 607A.

Plato's ground for recommending that traditional poetry and music be censored is not ascetic, if by "ascetic" one means to suggest an antipathy to any satisfaction of the possession-loving and honor-loving parts, for at 571E he does advise that these be neither starved nor overfed, and at 586E6-587A1 he notes that under the rule of the wisdom-loving part these parts will enjoy their own appropriate pleasures. The proposal that the poets be censored proceeds from Plato's view that they fail to understand that the possession-loving part is already quite large and overbearing, the mass of the psyche in each of us (442A; Cp. Laws 689A-B). In their ignorance these poets stuff what needs a reducing diet. They overfeed it by describing in attractive terms their character's excessive sensual gratification. And since these poets find it difficult to imitate a moderate and stable model of which they are largely ignorant in any case, they starve the very part which on his view needs feeding (605E-606A).
Yet it is possible and on Plato's view desirable to contrive poetry, music and rhetoric which quiet and soothe the possession-loving and honor-loving parts and thus render them more easily satisfied and more nearly in tune with the wisdom-loving part (606B-607A). Indeed, it seems likely that the function of his own myths is to do just that to his readers, as Gorgias 493B-D suggests. Note that they often deal with honors, victories and ambrosial satisfactions, albeit in an after-life. These are the very things which on his own view the wisdom-loving part of the psyche is least interested in. Such stories are addressed then not to the part which cares for truth and genuineness but to parts concerned with reputation, honor, and sensual gratification.

It may be a bit disconcerting to read Plato with the suspicion that he sometimes tried to appeal not merely to what he viewed as our wiser parts but to what he viewed as our unwise and gullible ones as well. It is perhaps slightly unsettling to think that he may be trying not merely to inform but to reform the reader. But on reflection, it would have been inappropriate for him to have done less than this if he held the views attributed to him in this study. To his credit, he usually employs appeals to honor and sensual appetite only after he has already tried to make his case in the straightforward dialectical way appropriate for an appeal to the wisdom-loving part. This is the case at Phaedo 114D, where he sums up the import of the beliefs he has been recounting since 108E, having already offered such arguments as he can to the same effect, though without such covert appeals to appetite as one sees at 113Eff. Similarly in the Myth of Er at Republic 619B-620E, the appeal is clearly to the possession-loving and honor-loving parts, which not only feel certain pleasures of indulgence but associated pains of deprivation and the threat of it; the threat posed to them here is evident.

At Gorgias 523Aff., the same sort of threat to the honor-loving and possession-loving parts may be recognized in the talk of a judgment after death, dungeons, stripes and the like inflicted upon a naked psyche, talk admittedly offered to reinforce the more reasonable appeals made earlier. Compare, for example, 527B-E with 497D, where Socrates had argued that good things are not the same as pleasant ones, nor bad things the same as unpleasant ones; yet 527B-E dwells upon the pains, tortures, retributions and the like allegedly awaiting the evil person after death. Socrates' concern, as he reminds us at 500C, is with that way of life which is best, and on his view such a way of life depends upon law and order in the psyche (504D), which requires the restraining of passions (505B), a process of restraint which, I submit, he himself embarks upon in this myth. As he had noted at 503D-E, in a passage which I take to apply to his own writing as he saw it, Plato remarks,

...the good man, who is intent upon the best when he speaks, will surely not speak at random in whatever he says, but with a view to some object. He is just like any other craftsman who, having his own particular work in view, selects the things he applies to that work of his, not at random, but with the purpose of giving a certain form to whatever he is working upon".

The form which is of most interest to Plato in such contexts is ἀρετὴ (Republic 445C6), which is health, good condition, or good order in the psyche (Republic 444D10-E1, Gorgias 504D-E). That good order is an arrangement of parts, as we have seen. Merely to make a straightforward dialectical case with no supplementary use of myths and charming stories would on Plato's view be to appeal solely to less than a third of one's hearer or reader -- to a beleaguered fraction in love with wisdom already and in need of reinforcements in its attempt to unify or harmonize the psyche (Republic 527D-E). Stories which soothe and quiet parts B and C also increase the relative strength of part A, the wisdom-loving one.
In a good state such reinforcements would come from without in the form of carefully chosen myths, music and poetry. In the poor states in which people actually live one may have to provide these for oneself. Indeed, Plato's positing an internal use of rhetoric and of "charms" in the Phaedrus as at Republic 608A provides a theoretic framework for this self-persuasive enterprise. And he had already described Socrates as engaged in what looks very like such an enterprise. One of the more striking passages occurs near the end of the Phaedo, where Socrates recounts an elaborate myth about an after-life and much else. Upon completing it he remarks, at 114D-E,

Now it would not be fitting for a man of sense to maintain that all this is just as I have described it, but that this or something like it is true concerning our souls and their abodes, since the soul is shown to be immortal, I think he may properly and worthily venture to believe; for the venture is well worth-while; and he ought to repeat such things to himself as if they were magic charms, which is the reason why I have been lengthening out the story so long.

Note that Socrates recommends telling oneself such stories for the reassuring and calming effect they may have, and that immediately upon concluding this remark he calmly begins his final preparations to drink the hemlock and die. He has told a lengthy tale which he will not confidently claim is true, and has done so for the effect it has upon himself. The tale has been told, then, as an εὐφάνης, a "charm" answering both to Socrates' expressed eagerness to make himself believe that the psyche is immortal at 91A9-B1 and to the corresponding eagerness of Cebes and Simmias at 77E. Significantly, his friends here do not wish to be regarded as themselves afraid of death, but as having perhaps a child within them who has such a fear. They regard Socrates as expert in charming away such fears, and suspect no one else can do it, but he tells them that they must themselves sing charms (ἐφησεν, Laws 665C) to this child daily until they charm away the fear. This anticipates Republic 608A. Laws 665C carries this line of thought even further, making this self-treatment into a civic duty.

If Socrates addresses tales to his own psyche, and advises Cebes and Simmias to do likewise, then he locates both the physician and the patient in the same psyche. On the interpretation of the Republic's theory developed here this is explicable. Much as the best part of one person's psyche can treat the best part in another's psyche (590B5ff.), so the best part of a person's psyche can treat lesser, childish parts with which it cohabits, if it has studied these parts and does not relax its guard (606A9). Such a person can "provide a λόγος for himself and others" (534B5).

The person who has done this successfully on Plato's view turns up under a variety of labels. This is the dialectician, the psychically healthy person, the true statesman who knows what is best for the polis and how to get it, the psychologist, and the genuine rhetorician. But this is also the virtuous or excellent person: to be ruled or led by a persuasively resourceful part which loves wisdom and harmonizes the other parts is to have no compelling motive for any conduct which is not virtuous or excellent.

It has been argued above that the parts of the psyche as Plato describes them overlap in a number of their capacities at a minimal level, and that the very conceivability of one part's usurping the role of another turns on this. This is not to say that the parts overlap in all of their capacities even at a minimal level. Much as there are people who appear utterly devoid of certain capacities, thus making it appropriate to deny that they have them at all, so the parts are conceived of as having or lacking certain capacities. Part A, for example, is characterized as gentle, not forceful or violent, and it is plainly...
beyond its capacity overpower the other parts by brute strength, as part B might overpower the others in anger or part C in hunger, thirst or sexual desire. If it utterly lacks sheer brute force, however, it is compensated for this by possessing a potential for deep psychological understanding of the other parts and a persuasive power predicated upon that understanding which parts B and C utterly lack. The rule of part B is reflected in the behavior of people whose psyches it rules. They do not persuade; they rely rather on harshness (549A1) and force in ruling (548B7). Those whose psyches are ruled by part C do not keep down evil desires by persuading themselves that they had better not indulge them, but keep them down, if at all, only out of fear for the loss of their possessions (554D2-3).

That the parts of the psyche are so conceived that they overlap in certain capacities but not others only serves to make them all the more like the people to whom they correspond. This brings us, finally, to an almost-inevitable reservation one must at least entertain about Plato's theory as interpreted here. In fact, if this reservation is thought seriously unflattering to Plato, and Plato is thought deserving of flattery, one may think reservation damaging to the interpretation itself rather than to Plato's theory.

The reservation has to do with likening anything whatever to a human being. It would be easy to caricature the theory as portrayed here as if it involved Plato in positing a committee of homunculi animating each person. Indeed, it is evident that a number of interpreters have been deterred from offering the sort of interpretation developed here, despite the textual evidence for it, owing to the seeming absurdity of the view it attributes to Plato. One can understand the reluctance to recognize in Plato's theory so sweeping an anthropomorphism. People are scarcely our current paradigms of constancy or intelligibility. The theory may appear to have gone so far in its anthropomorphism that it incorporates at a new level the very sorts of problems it was designed to illuminate. If we are curious, as Plato evidently was, why a tyrant lacks self-control, it will scarcely impress us to be told that this is owing to his being ruled within by a mini-tyrant who lacks self control (575C5-D2). This internal agent may seem all-too-like the one whose foibles motivated the theory in the first place. The explanatory power of a theory positing such an agent within may seem to rank about as low as that of Anaxagoras' alleged view that everything is what it contains the most of, and that what it contains the most of is readily apparent in its sensible qualities.

This sort of problem has been recognized in the literature before, but has not to my knowledge had an adequate treatment. The dangers it poses are not confined to a seeming dearth of explanatory power. On the pattern of explanation Plato employs, namely the pattern of explaining the action of a whole as the overt action of a part within a whole, one may wonder why, if at all, one cannot then ask about the action of that part, treating it in turn as a whole, and so embarking upon a vicious infinite regress. The more closely Plato assimilates parts of the psyche to people, the more he appears to invite this regress. Such a regress of parts-within-parts could make nonsense of Plato's theory as interpreted in this study.

The regress problem is the easier of the two to deal with, for it can be solved on textual grounds alone, without appealing to extra-Platonic notions such as that of explanatory power.

A regress of parts-within-parts could make nonsense of Plato's theory as interpreted here only if Plato were so engrossed in making the parts correspond to people that he made the parts subject to the same sorts of problems which motivated him to posit parts initially. These, it will be recalled, were problems of internal conflict, and the incoherence which
seems to result from not recognizing it. But did he describe any part of the psyche as being beset by the sorts of conflict suffered by a person such as Leontius?

It is important to recognize here that not just any internal conflict in a part will be sufficient to get an infinite (and hence vicious) regress going. An infinite regress would require that the conflicts be between sub-parts isomorphic to the tripartite person, sub-parts which love wisdom for its own sake, honor for its own sake, and sensual gratification for its own sake, all of these sub-parts within the honor-loving part itself, for example. But there is not the slightest evidence that Plato regarded any of the parts of the psyche as isomorphic in structure to the entire tripartite psyche. There is evidence that he recognized conflicts within part C, and hence that he was committed to regarding at least that part as having sub-parts. But these conflicts are between sub-parts given to different sorts of sensual appetites, not the familiar conflicts between a sensual part, an honor-loving one, and a wisdom-loving one.

It is still more important however to recall that Plato terms the parts of the psyche ἐλέος, a term usually rendered "forms" elsewhere. The paradigmatic forms are not animate, as the parts of the psyche are, and by not translating ἐλέος as "form" in its psychologies use we prevent a certain confusion. But we may also overlook an affinity Plato wished to acknowledge. One of the crucial characteristics of a paradigmatic form such as equalit was its purity; it was to contain no tincture of anything incompatible with it (Phaedo 74B-C). The ἐλέος τῆς ψυχῆς are "pure" in a related way, despite their being essentially active. They are, each of them, pure and constant in their priorities. And in this crucial respect they differ from the people to whom they correspond by as vast a margin as heat does from a fire.

At 581B1, for example, the honor-loving part B is said to be wholly set upon (ὥν ἐφιστὸς) ruling, winning and good reputation. There is, as argued earlier, a means-end relationship even among these three things which part B is set upon, but Plato's point here appears to be that anything other than these three is never valued by this part save as a means to one or more of these. The lover of something loves all of it (475B5), cannot get enough of it (475C9), and welcomes it on any pretext (475A7). Plainly no person, no matter how fanatic or crazed, is likely to measure up to the Platonic description "lover of __". A lover of __ is a stereotype, a paradigm, an ἐλέος which a person can only approximate.

No person containing several such stereotypical ἐλέος set quite insatiably on disparate goals could easily measure up to any one of them fully. People, living in the realm of becoming (525B5), cannot easily rise out of it and ignore what any part demands. Unlike their psychic parts, people contain independent and inherently fractious parts. The parts of the psyche Plato posits then cannot mirror the exact sorts of factions and confusions about priorities to which people are prone. His isomorphism of polis and psyche cannot generate a vicious infinite regress, for the political agents in the psyche are from the beginning elevated into form-like stereotypes unwavering in their disparate aims.

There remains the question about the explanatory power of the theory. The question runs well beyond the scope of this study and indeed the scope of Platonic scholarship itself. One must defer here to philosophers of science competent enough or audacious enough to hazard a measure of explanatory power. One may well defer also to philosophers interested in assessing without prejudice the philosophical merits and demerits of anthropomorphism and paradeigmatism.
It is perhaps appropriate to remind ourselves finally that the term "Platonist" has two distinct senses: "One who studies and explicates the views of Plato", and "One who adheres to and defends the views of Plato". One can scarcely adhere to and defend intelligently what has not been adequately explicated; hence the work of the Platonist in the first sense is prior to that of the Platonist in the second. I have attempted in this study to do only the first sort of work except where the philosophical defects seem to have loomed so large for so long and to so many that it is difficult to entertain the argument that Plato held views subject to them. To allow questions of the philosophical worth or defensibility of Plato's views to have any more extensive effect than this upon a work of interpretation is to risk proceeding on the unstated assumption that Plato's views -- whatever they were -- are known a priori to be philosophically defensible. But ideas of philosophical defensibility vary widely from place to place and time to time. Hence to assume that Plato's views are known a priori to be philosophically defensible is tantamount to making Platonism into a variable content religion, not a definite web of philosophical positions. Among those called "Platonists", as among the denizens of the polis Plato envisions, a certain specialization and restriction of function is wise.

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Notes


2 Kantian faculty psychology is not in question in this study. The variety in question we owe to Aristotle, who first articulated it in opposition to Plato. Aristotle had general taxonomic scruples about having the same things (in this case the same ἄνευμετά or faculties) show up on both sides of a division (De Anima 432b5-8). The priority of distinct activities in the definition of ἄνευμετά is clear at 415a19-20 and 416a19-20. This account of a ἄνευμετά in terms of the one thing it is a capacity to do is anticipated by Plato at Republic 477c1-3 and 41-6. Thus Plato had the requisite terms to express a faculty psychology had he wished to do so, but he never terms a part of the psyche a ἄνευμετά, though he describes parts as possessing ἄνευμετά. Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (Edinburgh, 1788), pp. 76, 187-8, is actually in Aristotle's camp, though he fancies himself a follower of Plato. He is followed in suggesting that Plato was a faculty psychologist by interpreters and translators who (1) refer to the parts of the psyche as faculties or powers, (2) term these parts "principles", or (3) describe the activity, nature and relation of these parts to the person whose parts they are as if they were faculties or principles of Reid's sort. See, for example, F. M. Cornford, "The Division of the Soul", Hibbert Journal 28 (1929-30), p. 213; A Chaignet, *De La Psychologie de Platon* (Paris, 1862), pp. 219, 231, 235; Andreas Leissner, *Die platonische Lehre von der Seelenteilung, Wesen und Stellung innerhalb der platonischen Philosophie* (Nördlingen, 1909), p. 39; N. R. Murphy, *The Interpretation of Plato's Republic* (Oxford, 1951), pp. 32, 34; Paul Shorey, "The Unity of Plato's Thought", The Decennial Publications (Chicago, 1904), 1st Series, Vol. VI, pp. 166ff.; R. C. Cross and A. D. Woozley, *Plato's Republic: A Philosophical Commentary* (London, 1966), p. 124; T. M. Robinson, *Plato's Psychology* (Toronto, 1970), pp. 42-3, 51, 121, 124; W. K. C. Guthrie, "Plato's Views on the Nature of Soul", Fondation Hardt Entretiens III (Geneva, 1955), pp. 17-8; W. F. R. Hardie, *A Study in Plato* (Oxford, 1936), p. 141.


4 Such classes need not have more than a single member each (369D-E).


6 The translation follows that of G. M. A. Grube, *Plato's Republic* (Indianapolis, 1974), p. 96, substituting "psyche" for "soul".

7 *Laws* 626D-627B, 689D; see also *Timaeus* 69B-72D, *Sophist* 227Eff.

8 This is not a statement of the principle of non-contradiction as is sometimes suggested. Anthony Kenny, *The Anatomy of the Soul* (Oxford, 1973), p. 4, characterizes it more appropriately as "the principle of noncontrareity".
Uniqueness or singularity of activity or ability must not be inferred from the use of the definite article here or in (c), a use discussed and interpreted below, p. 8.

The underlined words render έαν μη ἤν θάλας τροπής διαλεγμένη, a phrase not given due emphasis by interpreters who see this passage as suggesting that parts A and B are really one part, since they do not normally conflict. Plato's point is that they are two parts because they can conflict, and he could not have developed either the objection to timocracy he does at 547Dff. or the sort of analysis of timocratic men he does ... at 548Dff. had he not laid this foundation. Contrast James Adam, The Republic of Plato, 2nd Ed. (Cambridge, 1963), Vol. I, Appendix IV, esp. p. 271.

Later at 571B-572B Plato cites the evidence of psychic faction provided by the contrast between the content of dreams and that of waking life.

My translation.

The specific number of parts posited is not crucial. What is crucial for the isomorphism of the polis and psyche is that each have the same number and type of parts. Thus it is of no major importance that bipartition is suggested as early as 375Cff, that the possibility of more than three parts is envisioned at 443E1, or that Plato sounds rather tentative and undogmatic about the number at 544D7-9. That the number of parts in the polis can be no greater than the number of psychic parts is indicated at 435E-436A.

See, for example, 506B-E, esp. E5.

The objection to the seeming anthropomorphism here is taken up in the final section of this study.

I. M. Crombie, An Examination of Plato's Doctrines (London, 1962), Vol. I, pp. 354-6, has denied this, as have Cross and Woozley, p. 128 and Murphy, p. 69.

The weak argument from age of emergence at 441A7-B2 is Glaucon's, not Socrates'.

This is not to say that it cannot all be confined in one body, or to suggest that the complex so confined cannot be "unified" and "made one" as the good polis is when it achieves unanimity. But unanimity does not bring with it loss of distinctness in the parts. This distinctness no more warrants T. H. Martin's conclusion that Plato has posited three souls in each person than it would warrant the conclusion that each person has two bodies because one arm can push against another in isometric exercises /Études sur le Timée de Platon (Paris, 1841, reprinted N. Y., 1976), pp. 298-301/.

Here I accept Graeser's term Kompetenzen, while rejecting his argument that what he terms the 'Satz vom Widerspruch' or Kontradiktionsprinzip establishes that the competence of one part cannot overlap that of another (p. 15). The conclusion is true, but Graeser's argument does not establish it.

22 See n. 2 above, and G. F. Stout and J. M. Baldwin, Eds., Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology (New York, 1901), Vol. I, p. 369. Similar views were held in German faculty psychology. Christian Wolff, for example, in his Vernünftige Gedanken von den Kräften des Menschen (Halle, 1738), characterized a faculty as a Fertigkeit (p. 144).

23 E.g., Cross and Woozley, pp. 123-4, and Hardie, p. 139.

24 Reid, pp. 47, 54 and 276, was clearly aware that a power requires an agent to use it, that agent being the person. Cp. Robinson, pp. 47-8.

25 Thrasymachus' claim that virtue is the interest of the stronger may be seen as an expression of an unbridled part C; Laches' claim at Laches 190E that "Courage is the willingness to stay at one's post, face the enemy, and not run away" seems an expression of part B; Hippas's all-too-revealing suggestion that "Beauty is nothing but gold" would be a paradigmatic expression of part C.


27 Commentators who, like Shorey and others, see Plato through the lens of faculty psychology, fail to do justice to his insight into the normal disunity of consciousness when they suggest that he was concerned to show the "synthetic unity of thought" (Shorey, p. 45).

28 It will be readily apparent that Plato cannot conceive of the thought or opinion of a part and that of a person along precisely the same lines without generating a regress. How those lines differ is discussed in the final section below.

29 My translation.

30 Bernard Williams, pp. 202-4, overlooks this point in Plato's argument, and concludes as a result that there are grave obstacles to Plato's analogy between psyche and polis.

31 W. H. Thompson, The Phaedrus of Plato (London, 1869), pp. xiii-xiv, notes that diverse views as to the leading idea of the dialogue are suggested by the various subtitles affixed to it by even its Greek commentators -- "Concerning Beauty", "Concerning Love", "Concerning Rhetoric", "Concerning the Good", "Concerning the Psyche", etc. R. Hackforth, Plato's Phaedrus (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 8-10, also notes ancient and modern scholars' puzzlement on the subjects and purposes of the dialogue.


The translation is that of Lamb in the Loeb Ed.

C. W. Müller, *Gleiches zu Gleichen* (Wiesbaden, 1965), esp. pp. 69-73, is useful on such theories.

Phaedrus 270C-D provides only one of many indications of Plato's contact with current medical ideas.

On the function of myth in Plato I disagree then with all who regard his myths as means of expressing "higher truths" inaccessible to dialectical expression. G. S. Kirk, *Myth* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 259, claims that Plato "uses myth as second-best". That suggests that it is a forced alternative to dialectic, which seems misleading. Myth is the Platonic therapy of choice for parts B and C, which are as indifferent to dialectical argument as part A is to "purely evocative and imagistic" tales of "lands flowing with milk and honey". Guthrie (p. 18) conflates the use of myth with mysticism.

Lamb transl., Loeb Ed.

Loeb transl., Loeb Ed.


As David Keyt has remarked, "One sometimes finds a philosophical objection to a theory offered as an objection to a theory qua interpretation -- even though it is a gross non sequitur to argue that a theory is a bad interpretation because it is a bad piece of philosophy. (But this fallacy is easily committed by Platonic scholars. One doesn't want the master to look bad.)" /*"Plato on Falsity", in Lee, Mourelatos and Rorty, p. 286*/.


Leissner, p. 46; Cross and Woozley, p. 124; see also Wright Neely, "Freedom and Desire", *Philosophical Review* 83 (Jan., 1974), pp. 42-3.

This problem was first recognized by Aristotle, *De Anima* 411b5-30.
At Republic 558Cff. Plato offers the psychological basis in his theory for the overt political conflict between potential oligarchs, tyrants and democrats, all of whom love possessions. He distinguishes necessary and unnecessary ἔθναμικά, and among the unnecessary ones he distinguishes those that are "terrible, fierce and lawless" from those that are not. The oligarch is ruled by the necessary desires, inhibiting the others. The democrat makes no distinction between necessary and unnecessary desires, and is influenced by each in turn (561A-E). The tyrant is ruled by the lawless unnecessary desires, which hinder other desires (574A).

This confusion may be encouraged by treating the psyche itself as an Idea, without sufficient qualification, as A. J. Festugière does in Contemplation et Vie Contemplative selon Platon, 2nd Ed. (Paris, 1950), p. 122.

Another objection to conceiving of the parts as agent-like stereotypes deserves mention. Hardie (pp. 139-40) and Cross and Woozley (p. 129) have argued that this conception would commit Plato to denying that persons could properly be held morally responsible for their actions. As Adkins has argued, however, the notion of moral responsibility has no clear counterpart in classical Greek thought, even when applied to persons themselves (Chapters 13-14). Had he wished to develop such a notion Plato was in a position to develop a notion of sub-personal responsibility, the responsibility of the wisdom-loving part for nourishing itself and for guiding the lesser parts.


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